

Notes on Some Moments in the Development of Slovak Literary Scholarship, and Particularly Slovak Literary Historiography

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The history of Slovak literary scholarship is relatively short and in certain ways rather complicated and problematic. Nevertheless, it is structurally similar to any national history of literary scholarship in Europe: it consists of the history of individual scholars and their works, institutions, groups and methodological approaches, initiatives or schools and movements, as well as the history of scholarly issues in each historical period, or, to put it in contemporary terms, of scholarly projects and changes in research priorities. What follows does not aim to place all of these issues into a coherent narrative, but rather focuses on a certain aspects and turning points in this history, mainly from the 19th century and the first half of the 20th.

We may begin with a few preliminary and general comments on the relationship between literature and literary scholarship.

A study of the history of literary study is of course a meta-operation, a “super-structure”, as is all theorizing about theory. At the same, however, it is clear that in looking at the developmental issues of a scholarly theory, it is necessary to take a look also at the development of the subject of this scholarly theory – in our case, literature. At the same time, the nature of the relationship between the history of literary study and the history of literary developments as such is not completely clear, whatever the culture. Literary study (or simply “theorizing” about literature) does not merely accompany, inspire, influence and promote the literary process (or simply “creative writing”), but it can often get in the way, obstruct, or confuse it. Thus, it is not possible to argue in any straightforward manner that theories of literature in all periods are directly elicited by literature of the period and the literary context of the period, or to claim any synchronicity or mutual dependency between these. And it would be absurd to claim that creative literature absorbs and applies various scholarly views, suggestions and theories. The structuralists commented laconically that literature and literary theory were two separate categories.

Moreover, methodological initiatives in literary scholarship rarely emerge from exclusively local cultural and scholarly assumptions. Much more often – and in the less developed literary scholarship of Slovakia very often – they adopt, unite or synthesise impulses from various foreign literary or even non-literary schools, which moreover often come from somewhat exotic scholarly contexts. An example might be geology, with its study of sedimentation or the classification of various tectonic movements, such as overriding plates or convergent boundaries. Physics recently provided literary theorizing with chaos theory, while archaeology is the source of techniques of taking “soundings” and making deductive reconstructions of greater units from small samples. Many of these methodological tools have been very effectively applied in literary-historical research by my late respected colleague and teacher Dr Oskár Čepan.

These external sources of certain tools and rules of literary scholarship are sometimes imported from environments where the literary development and situation are rather different from the situation in Slovakia. Thus, we often adopt as “new” something that has already played its role in the culture of its origin and is there now “history”. Moreover, literary study can sometimes use highly developed instruments and complex techniques which are not qualitatively related to literature itself: that is, a complex study may be employed for very simple or even primitive texts. This used to happen in Slovak literary history in, for example, in the case of studies of socialist-realist verse with the help of statistical assessment of the frequency of end-rhymes, and so forth.

The study of literature is a scholarly field that is traditionally understood as embracing literary theory and its specializations, its various branches and auxiliary disciplines, literary historiography, and literary criticism. It needs to be said that for long periods of Slovak history literary criticism in the form of informative articles, essays, reviews, comments and polemical essays together with bibliographies and biographies often replaced or stood in for literary scholarship. Nevertheless, it represents a singular, extensive and diverse terrain that has been explored (besides the relevant passages in various histories of Slovak literature) mainly in the accessible synoptic work by Rudolf Chmel *Dejiny slovenskej literárnej kritiky/The History of Slovak Literary Criticism* (1991).

Here we will be concerned only tangentially with literary criticism, nor will we treat the issue of the theory of literature. We will focus on literary historiography, which may be considered a specific aspect of general historiography. According to the Czech historian Jaroslav Goll, whose understanding of historiography entered the Slovak cultural context in the last third of the 19th century, historiography is a technique of finding and verifying objective facts supported by historical evidence and their internal relationships, and at the same time a method of linking them into a causal narrative chain. It is a purely positivist approach based on objectivity, verification, and causality of phenomena. It was precisely this understanding of historiography that was instrumental in overcoming the amateur attempts at literary scholarship in Slovakia towards the end of the 19th century and laid the foundations of Slovak literary scholarship as an academic enterprise, although as yet without an academic institution. (This understanding of historiography would later become an obstacle to its further development.)

Scholarly, or at least bibliographic, activities that constitute early literary scholarship in Slovakia can be traced back to the Enlightenment period. Between 1711 – 1785, a number of works of “*historia litteraria*” were published, such as compendiums, lists, dictionaries, etc. One of the very first authors is Dávid Czittinger from the city of Banská Štiavnica with his bio-bibliographical work titled (in short) *Specimen Hungariae literatae* (A Sample of Hungarian Scholarship) from 1711, which became a material and conceptual resource for authors such as Jozef Inocenc Dežerický, Alexius Horányi, Daniel Krman the Younger, Michal Rotarides, Andrej Šmál, and in due course Pavol Valaský. The latter’s work *Conspectus rei publicae litterariae in Hungaria* (An Overview of the Scholarly and Literary Community in Hungary, 1785) is a history of Hungarian and

Slovak literary writing and represents a culmination of this type of effort. These works were summaries of information about "literary personalities", understood very broadly, in the sense of "learned men", and were published either in Latin or German. Some of these works contained introductions and prefaces in which authors occasionally responded to criticism in sharp, but rhetorically and aesthetically ample polemics.

Such writings, however, cannot yet be called literary-historical, because they were limited to summarising factual evidence of the life and work of individual authors, but did not yet seek any causal chains, any developmental directions, or construct any narratives or attempt schemes of periodization. The basis of any historical work, however, is the awareness of time and the possibilities of the chronological division of the time continuum.

In this context it is necessary to at least briefly look at the theoretical and methodological issues of literary periodization and several related preliminary formative ideas. One of them is fundamental and the others are relative to the functions ascribed to or expected from periodization by a particular environment.

The problems of history and historiography, and especially of historiographical synthesis and their secondary reflection exist on two levels: the methodological-philosophical and the philosophical-technological. The basic principle of the latter is especially the question of the theoretical and practical perception of the problem of time, which is why the basic questions of historiography, including literary historiography, can be accessed through the exploration of time. Historiography, and particularly historiographic synthesis, is an attempt to justify the division of the time continuum. Not, of course, in a purely physical sense, but in its being, duration and progress defined and fulfilled by the succession of human generations in various environments, organizational forms and activities and the layers of their outcomes.¹ The parentheses of periodization, dividing the time continuum into sections, are to a certain extent permeable with regard to their preceding or succeeding environments and their content is specific to a particular historical science.

The issue of practical periodization began – historically speaking – independently in various civilizations at different times, but always when there was an urgent need to organize certain activities in relation to time – e.g., more broadly in relation to seasons or more narrowly in relation to night-time or day-time.² Elementary almanacs emerge from the need for finer-grained chronological segmenting of the year into days, weeks and months. The first (Sumerian, Hittite and Ancient Egyptian) almanacs were simple calendar notes of an agricultural character. Although they later developed into records and mythological legends of military victories, as in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, they did not yet have the ambition or ability to describe the continuity of time. They did not yet take into consideration succession, generational issues, or issues of community and state, and therefore did not record any changes as something constitutive and worthy of note. It was not until the descriptive narratives developed into evaluative -- celebratory, heroizing,

¹ For further details, see my study „Časová situovanosť 'rozprávania' a 'rozprávaného' a jej dosah na estetickú organizáciu epického textu“ in: ŠŤOVEC, Milan: *O epickom diele*. Bratislava : L. C. A., 1999, 15 – 35.

² E.g. MUMFORD, Lewis: *Technics and Civilisation*. New York : Harper, 1934.

laudatory -- ones that the conditions were created for the grasping of the issues of duration and change as the basis of conscious segmentation of the time continuum. This emerged not just from immediate practical need but from permanent existential need and the need to fix them symbolically. This was very likely related to the development in the division of labour and a general differentiation of society.

Living evidence that this issue concerned ancient civilizations is the Book of Genesis. Its first two chapters narrate the mythological story of the creation of the world, told as a continually ongoing and at the same time segmented act, lasting six days plus one day, with a result that is something that did not previously exist: being instead of non-being, a structured universe instead of amorphous nothingness. Each day of the Creation is in itself perfect and complete, because it is filled with meaningful labour of the Creator and because His work represents the beginning, solving and concluding of parts of a plan which is completed following the completion of the partial problems of which it is constituted. Each phase of the work is evaluated, and only then can it continue: "And God saw that it was good". The criterion for the meaningful creation of life is thus "goodness"; we can rightfully say that this type of creation is conceptualized and recorded as the creation of goodness.

Creation, constructed and structured in the Book of Genesis, is an act teleologically understood as emerging from an intention with an exact and regular internal chronology and periodisation, and in this sense, despite its mythological nature, it has as it were a historical dimension. The question whether this kind of periodization is an act of "he who narrates", or whether it is part of the "narrative strategy producing a historical text", cannot in all probability be answered with the help of the rational tools of contemporary literary historiography. In any case, literary historiography can relativise, or in a different environment confirm, many radical attitudes to history as a construct that is created in the process of historiographic narration. The permanent problem remains the identity of the narrator and the nature of his narrative intention.

The issue of historical periodisation nevertheless always accompanies historiographic production from its oriental beginnings in myths and almanacs, through the first systematic historiographic constructs emerging from the broader sources of the ancient Greek and Roman authors, through the theologically-oriented, medieval genres of almanacs, chronicles and biographies or legends serving primarily religious aims, to modern historiography, art history, literary history and philosophical history, based on rich sources and produced by the critical, sceptical, and rationalistic modern era from Enlightenment humanism to the present time.

Although this is probably the most legitimate part of a whole range of methodological and theoretical aspects of historiography, it is rarely discussed as a problem on its own in the Slovak research environment.³ This is probably because that periodization in its

³ Mikuláš Bakoš dealt with this problem in his monograph *Problém vývinovej periodizácie slovenskej literatúry* (Trnava : Fr. Urbánek, 1944) and his study „O periodizácii literárnych dejín“ (1959) published in his book *Literárna história a historická poetika*. Bratislava : Slovenský spisovateľ, 1969, p. 32 – 35. From the 1990s onwards, the issue of periodization was studied by Nora Krausová in „Problémy literárnej historiografie“ in her book *Poetika v časoch za a proti*. Bratislava : LIC, 1999, p. 71 – 98) and Tomáš

concreteness is unusually dynamic, because it depends on the object of research, while at the same time it is an intimate and inherent part of historiographic production in itself, which in a certain noetic sense – and as part of a wider theory of scholarship – can be understood as a production of a continuous (hi)story. Differences of opinion regarding the same object of study are often the results of different periodizing principles and criteria, which only underlines the role of periodization in both general and particular historiographies.

The basic assumption of (literary) periodization in the modern sense is probably the framing dynamic idea of literary or linguistic „development“. In general it is the product of the philosophy of history, which from its founding by Gianbattista Vico (1668 – 1744) dealt with the issue of the so-called rules of the historical process and its phases, but in the modern sense we also talk of the consequence of the influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory (Darwinism) on the historical sciences in the second half of the 19th century.

The idea of literary development – if we accept the position of the theorists of what is called historical poetics, Alexander Nikolayevitch Veselovsky or Mikuláš Bakoš⁴ – concerns the growth, domination, maturing and fall of period literary styles or movements and their replacement by others in a mutually competitive process. All of this happens on the level of literary generations, while the decisive acts are usually the work of creative individuals and more rarely of groups. However, without the assumption of a certain horizontal temporal linearity, succession and chronology, or the assumption of change, but also of structural similarity and equivalence of certain literary artefacts of the same kind (genre) and a certain epistemological similarity in understanding events and phenomena, it would not be possible to identify any literary development or construct anything more than alphabetically ordered catalogues or dictionaries of works and their authors.⁵

Since the authors of „historie litterarie“ did not yet possess these philosophical-methodological assumptions, the actual birth of literary-critical and literary-historical scholarship in Slovak culture did not take place until the 19th century.⁶ This was despite the objective presence of literary development in the Slovak environment from the 18th century, as reflected in the lively polemical and critical activities of the time (e.g. the

Horváth (in his book *Rétorika histórie*, esp. p. 167 – 171 in the chapter „Z archeológie literárnohistorického vedenia“ on Dobrovský, Jungmann, and Šafárik). Peter Zajac also discussed the issue in his study „Literatúra na Slovensku a Dejiny literatúry slovenskej Jaroslava Vlčka“ In: *Slovenská Literatúra*, vol. 34, 1987, no. 6, p. 537 – 541.

⁴ VESELOVSKIJ, A. N.: *Historická poetika*. Bratislava : Tatran, 1992. BAKOŠ, Mikuláš: *Literárna história a historická poetika*. Bratislava : Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV, 1969.

⁵ According to Josef Hrabák ,‘the most difficult issue that a literary historian must confront is the periodization of aesthetic development. Only then will the catalogue of bibliographic, aesthetic, biographic and ideographic data become a true literary history, capturing the development and logic of the succession of aesthetic canons and creative styles‘ (HRABÁK, Josef: „Niekoľko poznámok o členení literárneho vývinu. Na okraj štúdie M. Bakoša Problém vývinovej periodizácie slovenskej literatúry.“ In: *Litteraria historica slovacca*. I – II. Bratislava : SAV, 1946 – 47, p. 164).

⁶ CHMEL, Rudolf: *Dejiny slovenskej literárnej kritiky*. Bratislava : Tatran, 1991; KRAUS, Cyril: *Začiatky slovenskej literárnej kritiky*. Bratislava : Veda, 1991.

discussion on the issues of prosody in the so-called "epigrammatic" polemics in 1794–1795 between Jozef Ignác Bajza on the one side and Anton Bernolák and Juraj Fándly on the other, which concerned not just the principles of classical poetic forms, but also the issue of the language of Slovak literature within Hungary).

The 19th century is the time of a number of individual or collective scholarly activities considered today the key events in the history of Slovak literary scholarship and Slovak culture in general, beginning with Bohuslav Tablic's *Paměti česko-slovenských básníkův aneb veršovcův*/The History of Czecho-slovak Poets, published in 4 volumes as part of his series "Poezye" (1806 to 1812). The key texts and events that followed include the work *Počátkové českého básnictví, obzvláště prozodie*/The Beginnings of Czech Poetry, Especially Prosody, 1818 by František Palacký and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, the work *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten*/The History of Slavic Languages and Literatures (1826) with a chapter on Slovak literature by Šafárik, the codification of standard Slovak in 1843, the essay by J. M. Hurban *Slovensko a jeho život literárny*/Slovakia and its literary life, 1846/1847/1851, a new codification of standard Slovak in 1851, Michal Chrástek's unpublished and more-or-less schematic attempt at a literary history titled *Dejiny reči a literatúry slovenskej na Slovensku*/The History of Slovak Language and Literature (1844),⁷ Jaroslav Vlček *Czech-language Literatura na Slovensku, její vznik, rozvoj, význam a úspěchy*/Literature in Slovakia, its Birth, Development and Successes (1881), and finally Vlček's Slovak-language synthesis *Dejiny literatúry slovenskej*/The History of Slovak Literature (1889), which met international literary-historical standards in scholarship.

This selection of titles shows that Slovak literary scholarship developed in five languages (Latin, German, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak). Its other characteristic aspect is that from its very beginnings, in the works by Bohuslav Tablic, P. J. Šafárik and Ján Kollár, and then the Romantics, it adopted and synthesized general philosophical and aesthetic impulses from the external environment, at first mainly from the diverse schools of German philosophy and aesthetics (Kant, Fichte, Schlegel, Schelling, Herder, Hegel, and J. F. Herbart with his empirical aesthetics of form). Later, mainly thanks to Jaroslav Vlček, it took inspiration also from Czech sources, especially from the Herbart-oriented critics Josef Durdík (*Všeobecná estetika*/General Aesthetics, 1875, *Poetika* /Poetics, 1881) and Otakar Hostinský (*O realismu uměleckém*/On Artistic Realism, 1891) while in questions of methodology it looked to the critical-positivist historiography school of Jaroslav Goll.⁸ Initially it simply compiled and adapted these methods (or in the worst case adopted them mechanically); later, after the shift from post-Romanticism to Realism, and even later, after the domestication of Symbolism and the birth of Slovak Modernism, the foreign methods and approaches were selectively and programmatically studied and used for the furthering of the aesthetic goals of the particular generation.

In the most important developmental phases of the Czech and Slovak languages a great deal of the most inspiring methodologies and archival research came from foreign

⁷ Published in facsimile in Martin : Matica slovenská, 1972.

⁸ See Jaroslav Goll's treatise *Dějiny a dějepis* (History and Historiography), 1888 – 1889. In: GOLL, Jaroslav: *Vybrané spisy drobné I*. Praha, 1928.

scholars, especially the Czech ones. After 1918 the Czechs dominated literary scholarship, education and publishing in Czechoslovakia and raised the first generations of Slovak literary scholars. The formation of Slovak literary scholarship during the 19th and 20th century was thus under the influence of scholars who did not sufficiently understand the entire breadth of the Slovak cultural tradition (e.g. Hungarian cultural patriotism, cultural and literary Catholicism, the developmental role of the Bernolák School, etc.), or even rejected or denied some of its essential features. Some of their theoretical impulses and efforts were undeniably productive and had a formative character: after all, Czech scholars laid the foundations of modern university humanities departments in Slovakia. However, some of their theories (e.g. the view that Slovak literature was only a regional variant of “Czechoslovak” literature, espoused by professor Albert Pražák, a Czech literary historian and proponent of the theory of the “Czechoslovak nation”, who was active in the Faculty of Arts in Bratislava between 1921 and 1933) were problematic in both a scholarly and a political sense and instigated cultural and political radicalism in Slovakia between the two world wars.

This was the result of a historically created cultural-political and social situation, in which there was practically no ethnically and linguistically Slovak academic environment on Slovak territory until the 1920s and no cultivation of scholarly disciplines as university subjects.

Scholarly research, if we can use this word to describe a certain reasonably systematic attention given to some historical disciplines (especially national history) by a few individuals, was typically undertaken by pastors, notaries, archivists, editors or schoolteachers, alongside their daily duties. More professional opportunities were to be had in Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Pécs, or parts of Transylvania or Lower Hungary, but not in the cities of Upper Hungary (Slovakia). This is despite the fact that from the Enlightenment onwards and especially from the mid-19th century national revival movement, there existed various “learned societies” and literary interest groups.⁹ Scholarship had a high social status among the national elites, although for a long time only in its idealist and provincially reductive variety, seen primarily as an instrument for national survival and self-realisation. With all due respect to these activities, it is not yet possible in this context to speak of systematic scholarly research in any field, including literature.

For the “Štúr generation” (named for Ľudovít Štúr, the leading figure of the Slovak national revival movement in the mid-19th century), philology was an instrument in the struggle for national identity. Their wide-ranging cultural, educational, social and political struggle also had a scholarly dimension, as articulated by J. M. Hurban in his theoretical-

⁹ A student-led Societas Slavica existed in Wittenberg from 1783 and in Jena from 1792; Holka’s Readers’ Society of Malohont from 1792; Bernolák’s Slovak Learned Apprenticeship between 1789 – 1800; Tablic’s Learned Society of Banská Bystrica between 1810 – 1832; The Learned Society of Malohont, 1808 – 1842; The Czecho-Slovak Society, 1829 – 1837; The Budapest Society for the Lovers of Slovak Language and Literature, 1834 – 1850; Tatrin, 1844 – 1848; The Institute of Czecho-Slovak Language and Literature (from 1827); Slovak Youth Society, 1845 – 1848; Matica slovenská, 1863 – 1875; Živena, 1869 – 1948; the St Vojtech Society, from 1870; the Vienna-based society Tatran, 1870 – 1898; the Prague-based society Detvan, 1882 – 1948.

philosophical reflections in the editorial to the first issue of the journal *Slovenské pohľady* (Slovak views) in 1846 titled “Scholarship and Slovak Views”, and by his literary historical contribution *Slovensko a jeho život literárny*/Slovakia and its Literary Life in the same issue. In the editorial, Hurban explored the relationship between “spirituality”, “the mind (spirit)”, “faith” and “scientia” (“*The consciousness of the spirit is a conditio sine qua non of the life of nations. But this conditio is reached only through scholarship*”) and established a specific standard for Slovak scholarship: a synthesis of the “spirit” and “scientia”, in which the national spirit gains self-knowledge and at the same time goes through self-formation and development. Moreover, he was of the view that Slovak scientia should be different from the contemporary European scientia, something “original”, and at the same time a firm part of “Slavonic” scientia: „*A Slavonic scholar must, with his original Slavic eye, see the truth of the spiritual worlds and render it, describe, depict, expose and carve out for the view of the whole world... Scientia... must be new, original, not out-dated, old, consumed, wilting and fossilized, that is, not a dead scientia but a living one.*“ Thus, Hurban postulated Slovak scientia as “national” and therefore strongly spiritually oriented. Tomáš Horváth follows E. Várossová in referring to Hurban’s view that nature must be imagined as a „*divine world, the world of the spirit, of the idea*“.¹⁰ In this way, Hurban ideologically established the place of the natural sciences in the system of “Slovak scientia”.

The bias of the national elites towards the formation of the national identity, as well as the de facto cultural and educational situation of the period, excluded (even outside of ideology) any reflections about a scientific universalism.

Another specificity of the development of Slovak literary historiography is the fact that before dealing with the questions of periodization, chronology and terminology of styles, it first had to clarify the basic problem of the *historical identity of Slovak literature*, i.e. the question of what in fact *is* Slovak literature. Literary historiography in Slovakia (or Upper Hungary) inevitably dealt with this question more-or-less speculatively, intuitively and fragmentarily, even before it became a scholarly discipline, that is, in its bio- and bibliographic prehistory.

This question of Slovak identity had several dimensions: linguistic, generic, geographic and cultural-political, among others. These were the central concern of several literary generations.

The linguistic dimension involved the issue of the actual cultural situation and communicative reach of the literary texts written in Latin, Czech, German and Hungarian. It is clear that the issue of language was not just technical and intellectual, but first and foremost an issue of national identity, and as such was a long-term problem inherent in Slovak literary historiography itself: Šafárik’s *Geschichte...* was written in German, Tablic’s *Paměti...* in Czech, Vlček’s first book *Literatura na Slovensku* (Literature in Slovakia, 1881) likewise in Czech. As it happens, only Hurban’s study was written in Slovak.

The generic and typological dimension involved the problem whether the integral part of the body of Slovak literature should include texts on theology, linguistics,

¹⁰ HORVÁTH, Tomáš: *Rétorika histórie*. Bratislava : Veda, 2002, p. 178.

geography, historiography, encyclopedic texts, educational works, memoirs, travelogues, etc., that is “general writing”, or only consciously artistic texts, namely poetry and prose fiction, while the definition of what is “consciously artistic” created another problem.

The geographic dimension of the question was the dilemma whether a Slovak author can be anyone born in the Slovak territory (Upper Hungary) but working outside of this region, and moreover in a foreign language, or – later – someone born outside of Slovakia, but writing in Slovak or at least Slovakized Czech. This issue has been dealt with by the Division of older Slovak historiography of Institute of Slovak Literature SAS¹¹ and by Stanislav Šmatlák in his sub-chapter on the “Historical Identity of Slovak Literature and the Development of Synthetic Ideas about It” in both editions of his *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry/History of Slovak Literature*. Šmatlák’s in-depth study deals with the question of “concrete historical factuality of Slovak literature” and specifically focuses on the cases of Tablic, Šafárik, Hurban and Vlček, but also on the Czech revivalist literary scholars Dobrovský and Jungmann.¹² Recently, Tomáš Horváth has also contributed to the discourse with his somewhat polemical corrections.¹³

But how did the individual authors see their scholarly goals? What were their “research projects”?

Bohuslav Tablic in his series *Paměti česko-slovenských básníkův aneb veršovcův, kteříž se buďto v Uherské zemi zrodili, aneb aspoň v Uhřích živi byli*¹⁴/The Memory of Czecho-Slovak Poets or Versifiers, Either Born or Resident in Upper Hungary put together a basic corpus of authors and works based on the criteria of Slovak language and geography, while the issue of genre was predetermined with his interest in “versifiers” only. His original project was an anthology of original as well as translated poetry, with the intention, as he writes in the introduction to the first volume of *Paměte/Reminiscences* (1806) “to kindle in the hearts of our dear patriots a love for the literary arts and [...] a desire for books and every kind of useful knowledge...” His authentic Enlightenment desire for “useful knowledge” necessarily led him to ask “What have been the achievements of the Slovaks in the past?” His search for “ancient writings and religious manuscripts and the literary history of past centuries”, led him, as he writes, to names, stories and works worth remembering. However, his ultimate goal was to “use the worthy example of these men to awaken in my dear patriots the ambition to follow in their footsteps”.

Tablic’s research project can thus be characterized by notions such as “usefulness”, “exemplariness” or “inspiration”, and his goal is a text offering “useful knowledge” for

¹¹ GÁFRIKOVÁ, Gizela et al.: *Panonia docta. Učená Panonia. Z prehistórie uhorsko-slovenskej literárnej historiografie*. Bratislava : Veda, 2003.

¹² ŠMATLÁK, Stanislav: *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry. Od stredoveku po súčasnosť*. Bratislava : Tatran, 1988, p. 16 – 47. ŠMATLÁK, Stanislav: *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry I. (9. – 18. storočie)*. Bratislava : Národné literárne centrum, 1997, p. 20 – 58. Other scholars who have dealt with this issue include J. Škultéty, Š. Krčméry, P. Bujnáč, A. Pražák, W. Bobek, R. Brtáň, J. Minárik, G. Gáriková, E. Tkáčiková and E. Brtáňová.

¹³ Horváth studies part of this problem, especially the effect of the distinctive function of standard languages on the literary-historical discourse in the 19th century, especially in the chapter „Z archeológie literárnohistorického vedenia“ in *Rétorika histórie*. Bratislava : Veda, 2002. Passim.

¹⁴ Published in his work *Poesie* in 1806, 1807, 1809 and 1812; the most recent reprint is from 2003.

“patriots”. This is a pragmatic, not an ideological goal, because it concerns “patriots” (“our Slovaks”), but not yet the “homeland” that he cannot yet name.

The way in which Tablic’s initiative represents a breakthrough is not in any national-ideological conceptualization, nor in a specific new literary-historical narrative technique, but in his practical and focused historical-critical summarising of data from older Latin- and German-language compendiums of Upper-Hungarian origin, his aesthetically selective view of literary facts, and his use of Czech as a literary language. His periodisation of the biblio- and biographic material is chronological, not alphabetical. As a consequence, his first entry is on Silván, who died in 1572, and the last on Žigmund Paulíny, who died in 1783, just eleven years before Tablic started working on his *Poetry and Reminiscences*. Tablic’s specific literary-historical contribution is in the short chapters where he seeks to relate literary development to the socio-political context. In Volume I, he writes on “The Reasons that Impeded the Development of Poetic Art in the 16th Century”, listing such limiting factors as the invasions of the Tatars and the Turks, the struggle of Zápoľský against Ferdinand and the persecution of the Protestants. In Volume III his “Reflections on the Versifiers in the 18th Century and the Value of Their Songs” begin to apply his aesthetic value judgements, e.g. when he judges S. Hruškovic, D. Krman, P. Jakobei, J. Chrastina, A. Doležal, Michal Inštitoris, M. Lauček and some others as “better rhymesters” than others.

Pavol Jozef Šafárik’s chapter *Dejiny jazyka a literatúry Slovákov*/The history of Slovak language and literature/ in his *Geschichte der slawischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten* /The History of Slavic Languages and Literatures in all Dialects¹⁵ took an inclusive approach to the issues of typology and genre, including educational writing in “literature”; for him, the greatest issue was the question of the relationship between Slovak and Czech literature, considering that standard Slovak did not yet exist, posing a problem for literary language. He solved the problem with an unsystematic compromise by regarding Slovak as a Slavonic dialect (somewhere between Czech and Slovene), although he granted Slovak literature an autonomous position within the corpus of Czech literature. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the development of literary historiography, Šafárik’s work is regarded as “the first attempt at a synthetic history of Slovak literature”,¹⁶ even though his chapter was not based on primary research but was rather a compilation of other secondary sources and the result of a collaboration with the Romantic poet Ján Kollár. It is notable how the author undervalues his project in a letter to Kollár of March 1823: “It is not my intention to enlighten learned Slavs. My vision is addressed to the youth”. In a Preface two years later he presents his work as motivated by a “patriotic” intention to awaken “patriotic love” in the Slavs, revive literary life and ennoble readers’ minds.

The bio-bibliographic notes of Tablic, Rešetka and Chrástek also formed the basis of the work of Jozef Miloslav Hurban, for whom the question of the historical and spiritual identity of Slovak literature as an expression of “national spirit” was the Romantic generational literary-historical and ideological task in his essay *Slovensko a jeho život*

¹⁵ 1826; Slovak translation was published in Bratislava in 1963.

¹⁶ Chmel, 1991, citing Jozef Minárik (no source).

*literárny*¹⁷/Slovakia and its literary life. His “research project” had a synthetic and at the same time a teleological character: its purpose, which was to give a comprehensive picture of the literature of the nation, coincided with his ideological and political project. Hurban saw literature and the literary life as an instrument (in his opinion, the most suitable instrument at the time) for the formation of the nation and the national organism: “We have chosen Slovakia’s literary life because in it the national spirit is articulated, here it is at home, here it speaks what it wants and desires....”

Hurban’s periodizing criteria are not of primary importance and essentially reflect the fact that – as has also been noted by Tomáš Horváth – literature for Hurban, according to his interpretation of Hegelianism, is only a phenomenon of the spirit, only one of its representations and expressions. Individual (“Slovak”) books or their individual (“Slovak”) authors are only the particular material manifestations of the “hidden Slovak idea”, its representatives and at the same time various stages or “rungs” in “growing up”, i.e. the development of the Slovak historical spirit. Nevertheless, Hurban recognized a certain general periodising criterion: that of the “standard” or “written” language. The “hidden Slovak idea” gradually materialized and “grew up” in Hurban’s imagination “from language to language”, so to speak: first in Latin, then in Czech, later in Slovakized Czech, and finally in Slovak. This reflects the three “stages” of literary life in Slovakia: scholastic, Czecho-Slovak, and Slovak. Languages are developmental stages on the way to the “Slovak national spirit”, “selfhood” and “renown”.

The Hegelian “progress of the spirit in history” and its manifestation in the development of Slovak literature in the first half of the 19th century was for Hurban the source of historical optimism. It is characteristic that in 1848 Hurban interrupted his work after the second chapter and went to further the intentions of his “research project” literally with a weapon in hand, returning to his book only in 1851.

Jaroslav Vlček introduced his publishing intention in *Literatura na Slovensku*/Literature in Slovakia in 1881, i.e. thirty years after Hurban, with great care (although the publication was equipped with a very solid bibliographic apparatus and demonstrated an excellent overview of both primary and secondary sources): in the Preface, he modestly introduced his work only as an initial attempt “... offering to an audience of the whole of our nation a comprehensive picture of Slovak literary efforts, until someone more knowledgeable is able to place these materials into a proper literary-historical perspective“. Later, in the Afterword to *Dejiny literatúry slovenskej*/History of Slovak Literature (1889), he even noted self-critically that „The effort has failed in many ways: it was marked by a meagre experience of life as well as by the hypercritical nature and radicalism of youth“.

In spite of all his scholarly modesty, Vlček’s work already in the introduction presents a subjectively correct interpretation of his (then) literary-historical conceptualisation, including a formulation of the basic developmental periodisation of Slovak literature based on language criteria. He divided Slovak creative writing into two periods, methodologically excluding books in Latin, German and Hungarian.

¹⁷ Published in five parts in *Slovenské pohľady* 1846 to 1851; a modern edition by R. Chmel was published in Bratislava in 1972.

Vlček divided the First Period of the development of Slovak literature (from Bernolák to Štúr, 1783 – 1844) according to genre: 1) prose and poetry, 2) drama and 3) the novella and the novel. Vlček's Second Period covers 1845 – 1880 and is structured in greater detail, with markers from literary and cultural life, i.e., the literary and ideological formation and the key achievements of the so-called Štúr School, the founding and activity of the Tatrin literary society, the *Slovak National Newspaper*, the periodical *Orol Tatránsky* (The Eagle of the Tatras), Hurban's *Slovenské pohľady*, the 1848 revolution, the re-codification of Slovak (1852), and so forth.

Vlček's view of the geographic issue of the identity of Slovak literature was slightly self-contradictory, marked by Šafárik's conceptions of language, to which Vlček refers.¹⁸ For instance, Vlček omits Czech-language works by Slovak authors such as K. Kuzmány, Ľ. Štúr, S. Godra, S. Chalupka, M. M. Hodža, S. B. Hroboň, J. M. Hurban ("...their work before 1844 is not considered here..."), and not only on the linguistic grounds that "...they belong to the Czech section of our literature", but also for aesthetic reasons: according to Vlček, the Czech-language texts do not compare to the later, Slovak-language production of these authors: "...their value – with some exceptions – by no means reaches the standard of the later works of these authors". The basic literary-historical thesis of Vlček's first "history of literature in Slovakia" (i.e. not "Slovak literary history") is that "Literature that is specifically Slovak is [...] the child of the 19th century."

In his second work, *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry/History of Slovak Literature* (1889) Vlček transcended this position and significantly widened his historical perspective. Hence Šmatlák, in his own *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry*, concludes that Vlček "...greatly contributed to the clarification of the issue of the historical identity of Slovak literature".¹⁹

The publication of Vlček's first work, which was, as announced in the sub-title, intended as "A Contribution to the History of Czecho-Slovak Writing", was accompanied by certain ideological manouvres on the part of the Prague editor Pokorný²⁰ and his circle, as well the young Vlček himself, who was of half-Slovak, half-Czech origin and felt the need to specially explain in the text, and later defend in his correspondence, the Czech-language edition of his book.²¹ The key question was whether Slovak, thirty years after its codification, was a suitable instrument for scholarly research, or whether it should be reserved for aesthetic work only. Vlček was at first very sceptical about the scholarly possibilities of Slovak, being under the influence of certain Slovak "late Romantic" works by Viliam Paulíny-Tóth (*Mythologia*), Peter Kellner-Hostinský (*Vieronauka/Religious Education*), Samuel Ormis (*Výchovoveda* and *Učboveda/Moral Education and Pedagogy*), Pavol Hečko and Samo Bohdan Hroboň. His scepticism later diminished thanks to a growing and more specialized Slovak scholarly output in various areas and thanks to his close collaboration and friendship with the editor, literary critic and literary historian

¹⁸ See e.g., MRÁZ, Andrej: *Medzi našimi literatúrami (Československá myšlienka u J. Vlčka)*. Bratislava : SVKL, 1960, p. 127 – 147.

¹⁹ Šmatlák, ref. 1997, p. 43.

²⁰ Rudolf Pokorný wrote *Literární shoda československá*, Praha: 1880, which formed the first volume of *Knihovna Československá* (Czechoslovak Library); the second volume was Vlček's book. The publishers were Slavík and Borový.

²¹ *Letters between J. Vlček and J. Škultéty*. Bratislava : SAV, 1963, p. 14 and 15, letter no. 1, 26 April 1881.

Jozef Škultéty. In his *Dejiny literatúry slovenskej* Vlček no longer worried about the language aspect of his text.²²

Vlček finally explained his new role in conceptualizing this mature literary-historical work and his methodological approach in the Afterword, where he wrote: “*I have systematized the material using a key concept widely accepted today: the genetic. If the representation of literature is to be faithful, it must be represented only in relation to real life, which undergoes changes of time and all its circumstances. The individuality of the author, affected and conditioned by time, is only secondary, and only in the end come the aesthetic or scholarly principles. [...] That such a fragmented image is more difficult for the reader to put together than a continuous biographical narrative, divided by genre, giving the reader all information about an author at once, is clear; but alas, only this manner represents the subject faithfully.*” He went on: “*The second question was how much to take from the literary-historical material: every item of Slovak verse, every book, every article, whatever their significance, or only what shapes verbal art and gives it direction. It was not hard to opt for the latter. The wisdom of Hermann Hettner²³ was my motto: literary history is not a history of books, but a history of ideas and their artistic and scholarly forms. Hence, I used the progress of ideas that have moved the times and the individuals, to explain the origin of literary works.*”

Vlček’s mature scholarly effort definitely established Slovak after 1889 as the language of Slovak literary scholarship and created the preconditions for a broader literary scholarship in the Slovak linguistic and cultural space. Vlček’s synthetic work, in any case the first of its kind in the Slovak culture, is in both senses a fundamental work.

This, however, is only one aspect of Vlček’s contribution; the other is Vlček’s scholarly achievement in the context of the actual situation in the development of Slovak literature of the time, namely the exchange of ideological and aesthetic systems and criteria, the decline of the post-Romantic concepts and the influence of Hegelian aesthetics, the arrival of Realism and Positivism. All of this affected Vlček’s critical and scholarly influence in favor of a new direction in Slovak literature. However, this was neither simple nor straightforward.

From a philosophical-aesthetic point of view, due to his distance from the Hegelian aesthetics, Vlček at first encountered resistance from certain conservative literary and nationalist circles in the central Slovak city of Martin (especially from Svetozár Hurban

²² The language issue was, however, repeatedly brought up by Vlček’s critics, such as Samo Czambel, in *Slovenské noviny* IV, 1889, no. 111, 114 and 117, in *Národné noviny* 1895 and even in a Hungarian pamphlet published with additional commentaries in Czech translation (CZAMBEL, Samo: *Minulost, přítomnost a budoucnost česko-slovenské národní jednoty*, Praha: 1904). Czambel interpreted the Czech Slovak-sympathizers J. Holeček and R. Pokorný’s language expectations of Slovak literature when he wrote that „Slovak is suitable only for educational writing aimed at the common people, and for poetry. Scholarly works, however, must be written in Czech.“ Czambel did not see this attitude as performing a cultural educational function, but a political function. He considered Vlček to be an exponent of such Czech politics. Of course, his position was that of an exponent of Hungarian politics, whose goal was to paralyse all Czech cultural or political goals aimed at the Slovaks.

²³ German aesthetician, literary and art historian (1821 – 1882). His extensive multi-volume work on the history of English, French and German literature, *Literaturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1855 – 79), was one of the most influential literary-historical works of the 19th century.

Vajanský), while his contentual and methodological criteria were disliked by certain members of the Catholic intellectual and literary community, such as the so-called Osvald Group, centred around the journal *Literárne listy*/Literary letters and the almanac *Tovarišstvo*/Apprenticeship. This group of Catholic literati (František Richard Osvald, Jozef Kohuth, Tichomír Milkin, Michal Chrástek and others) reproached Vlček for underestimating the literary-historical significance of the Slovak Baroque authors, in particular the Bernolák School. (By the way, they worked in this field for many years; these authors worked on its bibliography and literary history and their efforts re-emerged fifty years later when the need for a new periodization of Slovak literature made itself felt.)

In any case, Jaroslav Vlček's *Dejiny literatúry slovenskej* (1888) establishes Slovak literary historiography as a scholarly as well as a university discipline, even though the Slovak academic and university environment was institutionalized only after the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

The thirty years between Vlček's founding work and the creation of Czechoslovakia produced minor works of literary historical research, mostly by amateur authors concentrated around certain literary journals in several provincial towns with publishing potential (Turčiansky Svätý Martin, Trnava, Skalica, Dolný Kubín, Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš, Ružomberok and others). *Slovenské pohľady*/Slovak Views was the platform of Vajanský, Škultéty, Vlček and Tichomír Milkin, *Katolícke noviny*/Catholic News had contributors from the Osvald Group, the protestant journal *Cirkevné listy*/Religious Letters published texts by Ján Kvačala, one of the first "factographic" critics of Vlček, Pavol Križko and later also Štefan Kréméry. Further, there was the monthly of the new Czecho-Slovak generation, *Hlas*/The Voice, which published texts by the likes of František Votruba, then its ideological follower *Prúdy*/Streams, then *Literárne listy*/Literary Letters with an orientation similar to *Katolícke noviny*, and of course *Národné noviny*/National News, with the dominant role of S. H. Vajanský as a literary aesthete and national ideologist, alongside Jozef Škultéty, already mentioned. Finally, there was the monthly *Živena*, published by the eponymous women's society. Other societies that played a significant role in the formation of Slovak literary scholarship were the Prague-based society of Slovak university students *Detvan* and the Trnava-based, Catholic *Spolok svätého Vojtecha*/St Vojtech Society, which later created its own literature section and editorial house. Its protestant equivalent was the *Tranoscius* society based in Liptovský Mikuláš, which however did not develop any editorial activity until 1918.

The work of the above-mentioned personalities or institutions deserves respect and attention and belongs to the history of Slovak literary historiography, but there is not enough space in this short paper to detail their activities. In this period, no relevant monographs were published, only bibliographies. As a curiosity, I will mention the short literary-historical summary by Jozef Škultéty in Hungarian, *A szlovák irodalom története*/The History of Slovak Literature, published in Budapest as part of a larger project in 1911.

In the 1970s, the literary scholar Oskár Čepan interpreted the methodological departures of Vlček's literary historicism as positivist causality, critical determinism, genetic criteria and ideographism. All of these he also detected in Vlček's followers in the first half of the 20th century.

Positivism in various forms and with various, though predominantly documentary-factographic accents emphases, was a general philosophical-methodological approach to research by the first generation of Slovak literary scholars between the two world wars. These include e.g., Pavol Bujnák, the author of another literary history with a symptomatic title conforming to the state ideology, *Stručné dejiny literatúry československej po Štúra*/A Short History of Czechoslovak Literature up to Štúr (1923)²⁴; the literary historians and bibliographers Anton Baník (two monographs on Ján Baltazár Magin (1936, 1937); Ján Vladimír Ormis, the author of *Zo slovenskej minulosti národnej a literárnej*/From the Slovak Past, National and Literary (1932); Ján Čaplovič, the author of works on Krman, Tranovský and Silván; the historian Karol Goláň, the author of works on the Slovak national revival and the Štúr generation; Andrej Kostolný, the author of a 1938 book on the Slovak Romantic poet P. O. Hviezdoslav; Ján Ďurovič, the author of *Duchovná pieseň slovenská pred Tranovským*/Spiritual Slovak Song before Tranovský (1939); Rudolf Brtáň, the author of a work on Baroque Slavism, 1939; Jozef Ambruš; and others.

Vlček's style of synthetically combining sociological, cultural-historical, political and genetic aspects, which transcended a simple ambition to "fill in the blanks on the literary map" was later taken up by Milan Pišút, the author of *Počiatky básnickej školy Štúrovej*/The Beginnings of the Poetic School of Štúr (1938) and Andrej Mráz, the author of monographs on Jozef Škultéty (1933), Ján Kalinčiak (1936), Terézia Vansová (1937), Maršall-Petrovsky (1939), Ján Čajak the Younger (1944), and the German-language *Literatur der Slowaken* (1943). A structuralist approach is seen in Mikuláš Bakoš's breakthrough work on metrics and historical poetics, *Vývin slovenského verša*/The Development of Slovak Verse (1939).²⁵

A significant follower of Jaroslav Vlček was the versatile scholar Štefan Krčméry. His works include studies of Ján Hollý, Ľudovít Štúr, and Samo Chalupka, aesthetic studies and essays on prosody, the tradition, genres, literary styles and relationship between folk art and "high" art, and an extensive attempt at literary-historical synthesis *Sto päťdesiat rokov slovenskej literatúry*/One Hundred and Fifty Years of Slovak Literature (published belatedly in 1943). Instead of a pedantic positivism, Krčméry favoured a pronounced narrative arc, creating after Hurban another high point in the Slovak scholarly essay. As a figure between generations, Krčméry oscillated between an essentialist, national-revivalist tendency and a modern outlook, between Realism and Modernism, between sentimental nationalism and loyal Czechoslovakism. This personal ideological-aesthetic schism eventually had a pathological outcome.

²⁴ In 1932 Bujnák contributed to the *Slovak Encyclopedia* with a chapter on the history of Slovak literature from its hypothetical beginnings in Great Moravian times until the present. The text is written in the spirit of what is known as Czechoslovakism.

²⁵ Martin : Matica slovenská, 1939.

An essayistic narrative style was also favoured by the literary historian Alexander Matuška, who began as a literary critic and only gradually became a scholar. Other significant scholars included Jozef Felix, Michal Chorváth, and later Stanislav Mečiar.

Positivist literary study saw its role in formulating the criteria of truthfulness and social and moral commitment and engagement in the literary representation of reality. Its methodological problems between the two world wars emerged in general from the changes in the perception of the function of literature (the influence of Structuralism) and in particular from the exhaustion of the possibilities of Realism and the arrival of Modernism.

A distinctive feature of Slovak literary scholarship is that since Vlček it has developed in an immediate organic relationship with Czech literary scholarship. Without the methodological, cultural, ideological and political impulses from Prague its development would have been very different. The close relationship with Czech scholarship and culture had a personal basis, with methodological principles and political departure points. Here we can mention – *pars pro toto* – two very different scholarly personalities.

Albert Pražák, a Czech literary historian of orthodox positivist thinking, who worked at the Faculty of Arts in Bratislava between 1921 and 1933, played a key role in the cultivation of a positivist tradition in Slovak literary studies after 1918. A diametrically different tendency was represented by Jan Mukařovský, the founder and leader of Czecho-Slovak Structuralism.

Pražák, who was a militant Czechoslovakist and believed in the existence of the so-called “Czechoslovak nation”, was paradoxically also the vice-chair of the literary-historical division of *Matica slovenská* (Slovak nationalist cultural and political organization). Pražák controlled key Slovak literary institutions and through his various other roles (e.g. as an editor of the scholarly journal *Bratislava* and as a member of the *Šafárik Learned Society*) he attempted to determine also the goals of literary scholarship. Although his interest Slovak literature was genuine, his approach to it was condescending and he regarded the study of Slovak culture as a study of the regional functions of literature and art. He often used Slovak literature to argue a general cultural, ideological or even a directly political point, as in his work from 1929 *Češi a Slováci. Literární dejepisné poznámky k československému poměru* /The Czechs and the Slovaks. Literary Historical Notes on the Czechoslovak Relationship. A controversial figure, Albert Pražák was a key actor in many methodological and ideological conflicts. He was especially hated by the Slovak autonomists, but even the moderate Štefan Krčméry called Pražák’s work *Literární Slovensko let 50. až 70 – tých* /Literary Slovakia of the 1850s to 1870s (1932) “disgusting”.

While Pražák presented himself mainly as a historian and cultural ideologist of Czecho-Slovak unity, Jan Mukařovský had a much wider and more positive influence on Slovak literary scholarship: Mukařovský basically started an entirely new line of thinking in Slovakia. This was inspired by Russian formalism (Tynianov, Eichenbaum, Tomashevsky, Jakubinsky, Skhlovsky, Jakobson, Zhirmunsky, etc.), the linguistic school of Ferdinand de Saussure, the Prague Linguistic Circle and Husserl’s phenomenology.

The primary and explicit aim of this new methodology was to transcend the increasingly sterile tendencies of classical Positivism, with its pedantic biographical

angle, its psychological and sociological biases. The wider ambition of Structuralism was to see the literary work as an autonomous aesthetic entity, which no longer fulfils the function of a national institution but is primarily the product of the free activity of a creative individual and the ground of his own ambition and not that of the nation. Literary development was for the structuralists no longer an issue of the interplay of psychological, social and other similar factors, but a question of aesthetic norms. However, it must be said that these modernizing “scientific” tendencies had only a limited influence on Slovak literary scholarship, despite the great efforts of several protagonists. Slovak literary Structuralism, represented in the late 1930s only by Mikuláš Bakoš, Michal Považan and Klement Šimončíč, with its publishing platform in the literary journal *Slovenské smery*/Slovak directions, formed the Society for Scholarly Synthesis, which between 1937 and 1940 provided a platform for the work of the structuralist linguists Eugen Pauliny and Jozef Ružička, the ethnographer Andrej Melicherčík, one or two theatre scholars, the philosopher Igor Hrušovský, and a few others

The decisive changes, however, happened in literature itself: when the modernist tendencies, especially expressive-lyrical aesthetics, corroded the realist poetics of epic prose (of which classical Positivism was a theoretical equivalent), leading to the Slovak version of Surrealism (“nadrealizmus”) in the mid-1930s, Structuralism could begin to establish itself as a genuine alternative to Positivism. Its reception in Slovakia, however, was sceptical; its eventual rejection came not from the realists, but from the irrationalist, eclectic scholars of Catholic and national-socialist political orientation: Stanislav Mečiar, Ján E. Bor, Jozef Šmálov-Kútник, Henrich Bartek, among others. Their issue with Structuralism was its “imported”, “alien” character. According to Anton Popovič,²⁶ some of the Russian sources of Structuralism led the plagiarist Bor to the idea that the aim of Structuralism was to establish a Communist “fifth column” in Slovakia. Slovak structuralists later used this insult to salvage their scholarly existence after the takeover of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

In the late 1930s the methodological tendencies in literary scholarship reflected the political spectrum of the intellectual community, which diverged greatly in orientation (conservative, or left-progressive), on the issues of the political form of the state (Czechoslovakia, autonomous Slovakia within Czechoslovakia, or independent Slovakia), but also on religious issues. Slovak autonomists, supported mainly by Catholic circles, sought to re-evaluate the role of Slovak Catholic intellectuals in Slovak history and “cultural tradition”. This was also reflected in the efforts to find a new periodisation of Slovak literary development as codified by Jaroslav Vlček.

An unavoidable part of such a revision had to be the question of the significance and durability of the influence of the Czech Renaissance and Enlightenment literary culture on the culture of Slovak Protestants. These questions were explored by a visiting lecturer from Poland, Wladislaw Bobek.²⁷ His initiative later inspired Mikuláš Bakoš to

²⁶ In his *Štrukturalizmus v slovenskej vede 1931 – 1949*. Martin : Matica slovenská, 1970.

²⁷ In his contribution „K problému periodizácie slovenských literárnych dejín“. In: *Sborník Matice slovenskej XV*, 1937, p. 486 – 501.

fundamentally re-evaluate literary historical categories and periodization in his treatise *Problém vývinovej periodizácie slovenskej literatúry*²⁸/*The Problem of the Developmental Periodisation of Slovak Literature*, which had post-Positivist departure points and used stylistic-typological classificatory criteria.

The next, professional period of Slovak literary historiography after World War II and especially after 1948 merged some of Vlček's methodological departure points, his periodisation criteria and narrative methods, with some structuralist tendencies and the directives of historical and dialectical materialism, and especially with the political need of the government to construct a new, allegedly progressive tradition of Slovak literature in order to legitimise its power.

This, however, is an entirely different paradigm – fortunately a late one.

Translated by Dobrota Pucherová

²⁸ Trnava : Fr. Urbánek, 1944, 30 pages.